

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE: A FURTHER INSIGHT USING WORK ENGAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates transformational leadership and how it could improve employee performance through the mediation role of work engagement in the hospitality industry. Having leadership qualities is imperative in the hospitality industry, which has become one of the largest global economic sectors. Since hospitality organizations are working in a fast-changing environment, they should embrace leadership behaviors to maintain high-performing employees. The data of this research was collected from rank-and file employees working in Jordanian five-star hotels using an online questionnaire. This led to gathering 293 questionnaire responses, that were cleansed and qualified for analysis using the AMOS software. The results obtained indicate that transformational leadership can direct employees to adopt participatory and empowering behaviors to improve their overall performance. The results also confirm that transformational leaders can harness their skills to enhance overall organizational performance through engaging employees in the vision of their jobs. The research concludes by emphasizing transformational leadership and work engagement as critical determinants of a competitive hospitality service levels and quality. This practically helps managers within the hospitality industry to improve their organizational productivity and outcomes through developing tailored and sustainable strategies to engage employees and enhance their overall performance.

Keywords: Transformational leadership, employee performance, work engagement, hospitality industry, leadership behaviours

1. INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry has developed significantly on a global scale during the last couple of decades, including market competition, customer demand, consumption behaviour, technological trends, and service range. These aspects have largely impacted the hospitality industry, and added up to a compelling case for higher performance (Tebogo & Steyn, 2015; Mercan et al., 2021). Senior management commitment to enhanced customer satisfaction requires leadership efforts to empowering employees and transform their values and attitudes to better perform (Al Falah, 2020). This is necessary in the hospitality industry as a globally competitive and output-driven industry (Kesgin et al., 2020).

Transformational leaders are known as those help employees to improve their performance and

ensure excellence in service (Liang et al., 2017). They provide the required support to employees to overcome difficult working routines and to feel engaged in policy- and decision-making (Mccoy, 2016). Such level of performance is essential to meet the massive investments in the various hospitality initiatives and their contributions in worldwide economies (Statistics, 2018; Xiong et al., 2022). Although employees, and their competencies, are critical to introduce a tangible organisational change, researchers have less focused on the factors affecting employee work engagement and how it affects their performance (Helalat et al., 2023). Transformational leaders can develop employee capabilities to improve organisational performance (Mittal & Dhar, 2016). This is because leaders with transformational style educate employees on the organisational vision and their related responsibilities (Khalili, 2016; Mastilo et al., 2024).

Whereas leadership and its different styles have been extensively investigated, the relationship between transformational leadership and work engagement, and how they contribute to optimized employee and organizational performance, is still poorly researched (Nasir et al., 2022). This research paper aims to better understand the role transformational leadership plays in lifting up the level of employee engagement and performance. The research explores how transformational leadership can enhance rank-and-file employee engagement within the insufficiently studied Jordanian five-star hotel sector. It reveals findings to help these organizations plan and manage their complex, luxurious services, shedding light on leadership evaluation, thereby expanding a better understanding of this open and dynamic industry.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2. 1. TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Transformational leadership is known as a style that focuses on enthusiastic and comprehensive behaviours to enhance employee performance (Nasir et al., 2022). This style decreases resistance to change, fostering behaviours that improve service quality, and enhance employee loyalty (Anggiani, 2020). Transformational leaders promote honesty and trust (Tadesse & Ayenew, 2023) through their main behaviours: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. These components can support the potential of employees for better growth (Lin, 2023). This is done through directing employees to the organizational vision, encouraging engagement culture, and motivating them to think out of the box and exceed expected levels of performance (Crede et al., 2019; Vlasenko, 2023).

Transformational leaders tailor their behaviour to motivate, inspire, and engage employees with an exact vision, fostering creativity, innovation, and adaptability (Ndisya, 2016). They actively deliver clear feedback to improve emotional connections, attitudes, and behaviours, while fostering a productive environment in the workplace (Azim et al., 2019). Further, employee suitability and commitment are supported, which enriches organizational strength and adaptability (Sharari et al., 2024).

The components of transformational leadership offer detailed aspects for assessing its outcomes (Bass et al., 1996). Idealized influence concerns charismatic behaviours that allow employees to identify better with their direct leader. Inspirational motivation involves determining the motivational goals of the organization. Intellectual stimulation promotes questioning beliefs. Individualized consideration, in turn, presents personalized development and support. Appropriately measuring these components is critical for capturing the holistic influence of overall transformational leadership within organizations (Helalat et al., 2023).

2. 2. EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

Transformational leadership and its relationship to employee performance is complicated (Andrejić & Pajić, 2023), enclosing social exchange dynamics that promote trust and loyalty (Lin, 2023). Based on the Social Exchange Theory, employees can be motivated by transformational leadership and the related qualities, such as inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation, have more potential to reciprocate with grown effort, enhancing job performance (Rabiul et al., 2023). By building a positive feedback circle, leaders will be able to inspire employees to not just meet but exceed the expectations of performance, which contributes more to organizational success.

Employee performance is key to improve organisational performance; it refers to the behaviour that allows meeting the organisational objectives (Mccoy, 2016). Transformational leaders offer feedback to link the objectives of employees to the organisation's (Thompson, 2016). Transformational leadership varies according to the level of commitment and productivity among managers (Almutairi, 2013). Prior studies have emphasised job satisfaction to be associated with enhanced job performance, thus concluded that managers should prioritise employee satisfaction to provide the highest service quality to customers (Harasis et al., 2024).

Employee performance can be examined by two components: creativity and innovation, which are essential elements for providing the right competitive advantages, mainly in service industries (Elidemir et al., 2020). Creativity, the mental source of promoting new ideas, and problem-solving, forms leads to the process of innovation, and the observed implementation of new or novel concepts in work-related services, processes, techniques, or methods (Kennedy & Anderson, 2001). Both creativity and innovation are vital for encouraging dynamic, organized, and competitive work conditions.

2. 3. EMPLOYEE WORK ENGAGEMENT

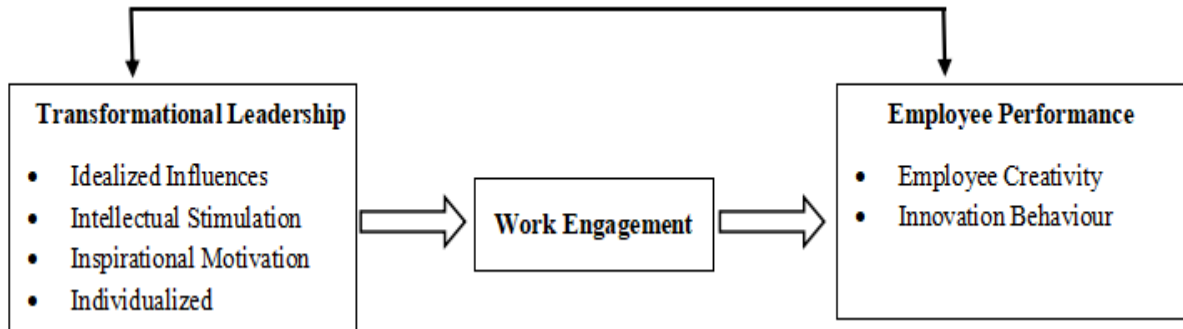
Employee work engagement is a mental and passionate association between employees and their direct job, containing attributes like passion, belief, and absorption (Shqairat & Al-Jundi, 2022; Schaufeli et al., 2006). This type of engagement is associated with positive results such as job satisfaction, psychological well-being, and organizational commitment (Lee & Ok, 2015; Puška et al., 2023). Studies emphasize that engaged employees contribute to an organization's performance and help to maintain a positive work psyche (Jung & Yoon, 2018). It can thus be seen that aligning employee values with their organizational values can strengthen engagement and enhance overall job performance (Al Daboub et al., 2024).

Mounting number of research works recently link transformational leadership to work engagement (Lesener et al., 2019). Strong relationships were observed between transformational leadership and employee work engagement (Christian et al., 2011). The engagement of employees varies according to their understanding of the fairness of the rewards they gain in return to their achievements (Nabhan & Munajat, 2023). Since employee work engagement is an ongoing cognitive state, leaders should consistently communicate with employees to create a collaborative atmosphere (Nikolova et al., 2019). Such behaviour is needed in industries that usually struggle from the high turnover rates and the difficulty to attract employees with the necessary skills and expertise, as is the case in the hospitality industry (Lee et al., 2016). Work engagement therefore represents a perfect state of employee well-being and productivity, where increased levels of engagement encourage sustained organizational change (Qawasmeh et al., 2021).

2. 4. FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

Reviewing the exiting literature resulted in developing the theoretical framework outlined in Figure 1. The framework mainly develops on previous works of Zhang & Barto (2010); García et al. (2012); Jaiswal & Dhar (2015) to address the question: *does transformational leadership have an impact on employee work engagement and, thus, on their performance?* The framework introduces the study's different hypothesised relationships between transformational leadership, work engagement and employee performance.

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework of the Study



Source: of Zhang & Barto (2010); García et al. (2012); Jaiswal & Dhar (2015)

H1: Employee performance is significantly impacted by transformational leadership.

Transformational leadership inspires, influences, and motivates employees through a clear vision, fostering a better work environment where employees feel valued, respected, and empowered (Yang et al., 2022; Choi et al., 2016). Leaders who adopt this style can present trust, support employee growth, and encourage reasonable communication, leading to higher job satisfaction and more commitment (Oyewobi, 2022). Therefore, hotel employees are more willing to exceed expectations, demonstrate their creativity, and develop service quality, which eventually enhances performance in general (Ali et al., 2021). In the context of classified hotels, a transformational leadership style can be especially powerful in leading employees to align with main organizational objectives and deliver unique services that satisfy guest experiences (Helalat et al., 2023).

H2: Employee work engagement is significantly impacted by transformational leadership.

Transformational leadership plays a key role in enhancing work engagement by creating validating and inspiring work conditions (Amo et al., 2020). Leaders who demonstrate transformational qualities, like empathy, vision, and motivation, allow a better employee sense of purpose and belonging (Schaufeli, 2021). This promotes a proactive and dynamic attitude to align and achieve both the organization and employee objectives (Zheng et al., 2023). By fostering factors like trust and teamwork, leaders are able to empower employees, making them feel respected and encouraged to contribute meaningfully to organizational purposes (Schaufeli, 2021). In industries like the hospitality industry, where engagement is essential for high-quality service, transformational leadership can be important to improve employee commitment and loyalty.

H3: The relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance is significantly mediated by work engagement.

Work engagement acts as a critical mediator in the relationship between transformational lead-

ership and employee performance (Lai et al., 2021). Transformational leaders inspire and motivate employees by fostering a sense of purpose, trust, and empowerment (Tan et al., 2024). This, in turn, enhances employee work engagement, characterized by increased interest and dedication to their roles (Okafor et al., 2022). When employees are more engaged, they are likely to perform at advanced levels, going beyond normal tasks to provide unique service and contribute innovatively (Schaufeli, 2021). Work engagement thus plays the role of a bridge, between the behavioral impact of transformational leadership and employee performance, making it vital to achieve organizational objectives (Islam et al., 2022).

3. METHODOLOGY

3. 1. RESEARCH SAMPLE

This research employs a quantitative method based on a simple random sampling technique. This sampling technique aimed to decrease bias levels and confirm the accurateness of results. All participants were selected by chance, which allows the sample to accurately represent the characteristics of the population (Mann, 2003).

The research targeted rank-and-file employees working in Jordanian five-star hotels. These employees are responsible for providing direct customer services, and were surveyed to evaluate their leaders' support levels and the related performance outcomes (Helalat et al., 2023; Maqableh et al., 2022). Targeting such a segment allows generalizability by obtaining research results that reflect the viewpoints of similar groups within the industry. It also eased reaching employees with less timeframe using available technology (Fricker, 2008).

3. 2. DATA COLLECTION

The research developed an online questionnaire using Google Forms that was distributed to the targeted employees through their department heads (e.g. food and beverages, rooms, engineering). The questionnaire was secured to prevent any addition or deletion of items, and was designed for respondents to fill out all parts. More than 1000 questionnaire links were sent via email and WhatsApp, and only 293 questionnaires were returned, cleansed and analyzed to reveal the results of this research.

3. 3. VARIABLE OPERATIONALISATION

Transformational leadership (TL), as an independent variable, is initially developed by Bass and Avolio (2003) and includes four constructs: idealised influence (TLII), intellectual stimulation (TLIS), inspirational motivation (TLIM) and individual consideration (TLIC). Each of these constructs is tested by four items, which constitutes the sixteen items of measuring TL. All items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale in which 1 indicates strongly disagree and 5 indicates strongly agree. This scale is employed to measure the questionnaire items due to its wide acceptance in social sciences.

A mediation test was conducted to reveal whether the impact of transformational leadership on employee performance is mediated by work engagement (i.e. vigor, absorption, dedication). These constructs have been tested using nine items (e.g. I feel happy when I am working intensely) that were developed by Kahn (1990). To measure employee performance, a scale developed by Zhang & Bartol (2010) was used based on seven items (e.g. comes up with new and practical ideas to improve performance).

3. 4. EMPIRICAL FRAMEWORK

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) combined with maximum likelihood estimation is utilised to perform the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to examine the structural validity of the scale and model (i.e. hypotheses). The CFA uses the measurement model between all observed values (i.e. items) and their related factors (i.e. latent variables) for every construct (Moussa et al., 2020). The SEM is considered as a suitable technique for the current empirical model; more robust and powerful than other ordinary techniques (e.g. ordinary regression). As the SEM permits correlations, cause-effect relationships between variables can be inferred (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012). These relationships among the observed values and factors should come out with a factor loading (i.e. weight) of minimum 0.2, where 0.2 to 0.3 is attributed with poor reliability, 0.3 to 0.5 is moderate and more than 0.5 is high (Smith, 2001).

4. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

4. 1. SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS

The study sample consists of 293 participants; their characteristics are summarised in Table 1. The vast majority of participants (88.05%) are males, and almost 60% of them are in the middle age group, 30 to 50 years old. In Jordan like many countries in the Middle East, the hospitality industry usually has higher a proportion of male employees, especially in customer-contact roles in five-star hotels. This inequality in gender reflects more general cultural and societal norms, due to this fact that might determine female participation in some roles, leading to a largely male sample. And most of the Jordanian hotels have more male employees, which may also contribute to the sample inequality. Regarding education, 39.59 of participants hold master's degree, 36.52 hold bachelor's degree and 23.89 % hold a higher diploma.

Table 1. Participant characteristics

Variable	Category	N	%
Gender	Male	258	88.05
	Female	35	11.95
Age	Less than 30	33	11.26
	30 – 39 years	87	29.69
	40 – 49 years	92	31.4
	50 – 59	53	18.09
	60 or more	28	9.56
Education Level	Bachelor	107	36.52
	Higher Diploma	70	23.89
	Master	116	39.59
Position	RD	96	32.76
	F&B	105	35.83
	Other	92	31.39
Experience	10 or less	24	8.19
	11 – 15	80	27.3
	16 – 20	46	15.7
	21 – 26	80	27.3
	26 or more	63	21.5

Research Primary data- Authors' calculation

4. 2. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND CORRELATIONS

Table 2 displays the means, standard deviations and correlations between employee performance (EMP), transformational leadership (TL) and employee work engagement (WE). EMP overall average is 3.68 (Stdev=0.67), with slightly higher average for innovation behaviour than creativity (3.82 to 3.54), and with an agreement level for both (respondents' perception). TL overall average is 3.71 (Stdev=0.81), with almost the same average for its four factors: idealised influences, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration. The least average was for individualised consideration (3.6), and the highest agreement level was for idealised influence (3.76). Work engagement had the least average among constructs with 3.54 (agree). All averages show that participants agree to the main three components based on 5-points classification. Variations to the three constructs were not the same as respondents showed more variation in TL than WE and EMP. The three factors came significant and positively correlated; work engagement is slightly more correlated with EMP than TL, with a correlation of 0.75 and 0.68 respectively. On the level of TL, intellectual stimulation was correlated the most with EMP.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and correlations

Variable	Mean	St. Dev	1	1.1	1.2	2	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4
1. Employee performance	3.68	0.67								
1.1 Creativity	3.54	0.65	0.87*							
1.2 Innovation behaviour	3.82	0.84	0.92*	0.61*						
2. Transformational leadership	3.71	0.81	0.68*	0.59*	0.62*					
2.1 Idealized influences	3.76	0.85	0.65*	0.56*	0.60*	0.91*				
2.2 Inspirational motivation	3.70	0.88	0.61*	0.51*	0.57*	0.93*	0.80*			
2.3 Intellectual stimulation	3.77	0.89	0.65*	0.52*	0.63*	0.93*	0.81*	0.83*		
2.4 Individualized consideration	3.60	0.90	0.58*	0.56*	0.49*	0.89*	0.74*	0.78*	0.74*	
3. Work engagement	3.54	0.64	0.75*	0.72*	0.63*	0.73*	0.67*	0.64*	0.67*	0.69*

Source: Authors' calculation -Smart-Pls software

The presented values in Table 1, are correlation coefficients describing the relationships between study variables. Positive values show direct relationship roots, while the strength of this relationship rises as values close ± 1.00 . Correlation coefficients labelled with an asterisk (*) mean statistically significant at level 0.05, indicating that the current relationships are unlikely to have emerged by chance.

4. 3. MEASUREMENT OF MODEL ESTIMATION AND FIT

Before moving to the CFA and SEM, Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) test was performed to examine the suitability of the study sample. Bartlett's (1954) test of sphericity was also performed to check for data factorability. As can be seen in Table 3, the result of the KMO test (0.948 - above 0.6 according to Pallant (2013) - and the Bartlett's test were significant, which confirms the suitability of the data for the CFA and SEM.

Table 3. KMO and Bartlett's test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.948
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	6832.070
	df	496
	Sig.	.000

Source: Authors' calculation –Smart-Pls ----- Note: The KMO value of 0.948 indicates perfect sampling sufficiency, and the significant effect ($p < .001$) from Bartlett's Test of Sphericity indicates that the correlation matrix is appropriate for factor analysis

Confirmatory data analysis based on the hypothesised model was performed to confirm the number of constructs and item loadings. By the use of CFA to check the fit of constructs, a Principal Components Analysis (PCA) with a Varimax Rotation was carried out and provided the results summarised in Table 4. The total variance of the model ranged from 66.1 to 76.2%. Generally, factors with component values less than 0.4 were considered to have a weak correlation with the factor and were removed from the analysis, which resulted in removing three items. All factors, as shown in Table 4, are above 0.4 and all factors were included in the model with a minimum of 0.55 and a maximum of 0.93. Cronbach alpha values are also above the recommended value of 0.7 (Moore & Benbasat, 1991), with a minimum of 0.74 and a maximum of 0.89. One item "CR1" is removed in the creativity factor as removing it increased the Cronbach's alpha coefficient by 0.74. The other two factors have been removed from the work engagement (items 8&9). The overall estimate of internal consistency is also above 0.75 for the three constructs.

Table 4. Percent of variance, Cronbach's alpha, and component loading rang

Dimension	Number of Items	Number of Removed Items	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Cronbach's Alpha	Component Loading Range
Employee performance	8	1	61.454	0.87	0.69 – 0.83
Creativity	4	1	66.3	0.74	0.739 – 0.86
Innovation Behaviour	4	0	77.46	0.85	0.85 – 0.91
Transformational leadership	16	0	66.1	0.94	0.61 – 0.83
Idealised influences	4	0	69.18	0.85	0.81 – 0.86
Inspirational motivation	4	0	72.69	0.88	0.85 - 0.86
Intellectual stimulation	4	0	74.4	0.89	0.84 – 0.87
Individualised Consideration	4	0	67.72	0.84	0.78 – 0.86
Work engagement	5	0	64.20	0.75	0.55 – 0.91

Source: Authors' calculation-, Smart-Pls -----The values indicate the reliability and validity measures used for each construct

AMOS (Analysis of a Moment Structures) 25.0 was utilized to measure the model using the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) that utilises the maximum likelihood estimation method. This aimed to test whether the questionnaire items are consisted of their corresponding factors, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5 shows the results of the model measurement for the main constructs: employee performance (EMP), transformational leadership (TL) and employee work engagement (WE). Regarding TL, all factors were found to be higher than 0.01 alpha level. For EMP, most factors were significant at 0.1% level except the first statement in creativity 'while working in this hotel *I come up with innovative and creative ideas*'. This is the only insignificant, and thus removed,

statement (i.e. item) about creativity from the analysis; the same result of the validity and reliability tests in Table 3. Finally, most WE factors were found to be significant at the same level of significant except items 8&9 ‘*I have considerable opportunity for freedom in how I do my job*’ and ‘*I have mastered the skills necessary for my job*’. Table 5 reports the goodness of fit for the study constructs, which suggests that all investigated factors fall within the acceptable range and, thus, the hypothesised model properly fits the data. The results of the measurement model have therefore solidified the convergent and discriminant validity, as well as the reliability, of the measures used in study model.

Table 5. Statistics of measurement analysis

Constructs	Factor	Items	Standardised weights	Goodness of fit indicators		Acceptable standard fit
Transformational leadership	Idealized influences		1.00**	GFI	0.956	>0.90
		II1	0.67**	AGFI	0.931	>0.90
		II2	0.72**	CFI	0.993	>0.90
		II3	0.77**	NFI	0.968	>0.90
		II4	0.74**	RMSEA	0.031	<0.07
	Inspirational motivation		1.00**			
		IM1	0.79**			
		IM2	0.79**			
		IM3	0.80**			
		IM4	0.79**			
	Intellectual Stimulation		1.00			
		IS1	0.81***			
		IS2	0.82***			
		IS3	0.77***			
		IS4	0.76***			
	Individualized consideration	IC1	0.76***			
		IC2	0.75***			
		IC3	0.55***			
		IC4	0.68***			
Employee performance	Credibility	CR1	-0.063 (NS)	GFI	0.989	>0.90
		CR2	0.592***	AGFI	0.958	>0.90
		CR3	0.538***	CFI	0.998	>0.90
		CR4	0.622***	NFI	0.992	>0.90
	Innovation behaviour	IB1	0.75***	RMSEA	0.049	<0.07
		IB2	0.88***			
		IB3	0.82***			
Work engagement		WE1	0.864***	GFI	0.991	>0.90
		WE2	0.872***	AGFI	0.972	>0.90
		WE3	0.824***	CFI	0.999	>0.90
		WE4	0.588***	NFI	0.989	>0.90
		WE5	0.588***	RMSEA	0.012	<0.07
		WE6	0.469***			
		WE7	0.276***			
		WE8	-0.123 (NS)			
		WE9	-0.079 (NS)			

Source: Authors' calculation Smart-PLS software -----Notes: ** significant at 0.1% level.

4. 4. STRUCTURAL MODEL RESULTS AND HYPOTHESES TESTING

Table 6 and 7 display the results of the SEM investigation of the research hypotheses (i.e. H_1 , H_2 , H_3). The goodness of fit indicators came out all greater than the recommended values, meaning that the SEM fits the data well (Bandalos, 2012). Then, the relationships between TL, EMP, and WE was tested to satisfy four conditions (Baron & Kenny, 1986): (1) the independent variable (TL) has a significant impact on the dependent variable (EMP); (2) the independent variable has a significant impact on the mediator (WE); (3) the mediator variable has a significant impact on the dependent variable; and (4) the impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable must become statistically insignificant after controlling for the effect of the mediator (Hayes & Preacher, 2014). If conditions 1, 2 and 3 are significant and the relationship between TL and EMP is still significant but reduced, this is called ‘partially’ mediated relationship; but if the relationship between TL and EMP is not significant, the effect of the WE is called ‘fully’ mediated.

Table 6. Results of structural equation models

Construct	Factors	Regression Weights	Standardized Weights	Hypothesis	goodness of Fit Factors		
Basic Model							
TL → EMP		0.525	0.824***	H1	GFI	0.985	>0.9
	II→TL	0.98	0.878***		AGFI	0.949	>0.9
	IS→TL	1.06	0.903***		CFI	0.995	>0.9
	IM → TL	1.06	0.918***		NFI	0.990	>0.9
	IC → TL	1.00	0.844***		RMSEA	0.036	<0.07
	CR→EMP	1.00	0.746***			0.716	
	IB → EMP	1.45	0.833***				
Mediation Model							
TL → EMP		0.101	0.147†	H1&H3			
WE → EMP		0.646	0.787***	H3	GFI	0.9845	>0.9
TL→ WE		0.643	0.769***	H2	AGFI	0.952	>0.9
	II→ TL	0.976	0.876***		CFI	0.996	>0.9
	IS→ TL	1.052	0.903***		NFI	0.990	>0.9
	IM → TL	1.054	0.917***		RMSEA	0.052	<0.07
	IC → TL	1	0.848***			0.818	
	CR→ EMP	1	0.806***				
	IB → EMP	1.461	0.908***				
Mediation Test							
Mediation effect coefficient			0.415***	H3	P-value =0.001		

Source: Authors' calculation ----- Notes: ** significant at 0.1% level, and (NS) is not significant. Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI); Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI); Comparative Fit Index (CFI); Normed Fit Index (NFI); Root Mean Square Residual (RMSEA). Author source: Smart-Pls software

The results of the structural main model show that TL is positively associated with EMP ($\beta = 0.675$, $p\text{-value} < 0.001$), suggesting that the greater the TL, the greater the influence on EMP and, hence, supports H_1 and meeting the first condition of mediation. The basic model explains 71.6% of the variation in EMP. In the mediation model (after including WE in the model), the results show that TL is also positively and significantly associated with WE, meeting the second condition of mediation. This result implies that H_2 is empirically supported. This finding, along

with the fact that the direct effect between TL and EMP is still significant (only at 10%, p -value=0.073) level but dramatically decreased, as in the main model, suggests that WE directly and indirectly affect EMP via the WE. The mediation model (WE) also indicates more variation in EMP than the main model; 71.6% versus 81.8%, respectively. These results offer empirical support for H_3 , suggesting that the relationship between TL and EMP is partially mediated by WE. This result suggests that EMP is significantly enhanced through the implementation of TL through the WE. Furthermore, we tested the mediation effect as shown in Table 6,7. Results show that the mediation effect is significant with a p -value of 0.001.

Table 7. Hypothesis testing results

	Construct	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
H1	TL -> EMP	0.244	0.082	2.986	0.003
H2	TL -> WE	0.808	0.029	28.125	0.00
	Mediation				
H3	TL -> WE -> EMP	0.443	0.07	6.356	0.001

Source: Authors' calculation Smart-PLs software ---- Notes: *** significant level($P \leq 0.05$).

5. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

5. 1. RESULTS DISCUSSION

This research investigates the main roles and conditions under which transformational leadership impacts employee performance. The research attempts to examine this relationship through the mediating role of work engagement. The results show that there is a direct impact of transformational leadership on employee performance with, as predicted, a significant mediating role of work engagement. Such results suggest that employees should be engaged in the vision and responsibilities of their jobs for transformational leaders to better empower them, and for employees themselves to be convinced of their organizational objectives. The positive correlation between all constructs of transformational leadership and employee performance was found to be consistent with previous research results (Helalat et al., 2023; Jaroliya et al., 2021; Park et al., 2021) suggesting this style to positively impact organisations by ensuring trust and cooperations to enhance their competitive performance.

In addition to the direct relationship, the results showed that transformational leadership is indirectly related to employee performance through a full mediation of work engagement in the hospitality industry. These results align with previous investigations indicating that transformational leaders promote different levels of values, confidence, inspiration, and motivation, which in turn lead to enhanced employee engagement levels within hotel organizations (Aftab et al., 2023; Jiatong et al., 2022).

By fostering healthy conditions, leaders who adopt this style motivate collaboration and a shared sense of meaning among their employees, eventually driving greater commitment and better performance. Work engagement thus governs both relationships between the leaders and the behaviors of their employees. This confirms the hypothesised claim that when leaders act as a role model, through providing individualised consideration, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and idealised influence, they promote better identification between employees and enhance their work engagement. Employees who are engaged in their work are thus more willing to think creatively and exceed their normal work duties (Tan et al., 2024; Steinmann et al., 2018).

Transformational leaders are effective when it comes to motivating employees to be part of their organisations, which improves their perception of work engagement. Earlier research works found a positive impact of transformational leadership practices on employee work engagement, which increased their commitment to their jobs and enhanced their performance (Yi Lai et al., 2021; Buil et al., 2019; Guan et al., 2018). In line with these studies, work engagement was found to be still significant and positively mediate the relationship between the transformational leadership and the quality of employee performance outcomes.

Generally, the research results show that transformational leadership promotes an environment where employees feel appreciated and inspired, improving their willingness to work creatively and innovatively. This style allows employees to generate unique thoughts and be able to solve work problems, which drives success (Bin Saeed et al., 2019). Further, work engagement is characterized by vitality and vigor; it creates a commitment that bridges transformational leaders' efforts and improved employee performance. Those leaders uphold engagement at high levels by enhancing the emotionally invested feelings by employees in their work. By cultivating work engagement, leaders indirectly increase the creativity and innovativeness of their employees (Kuntadi et al., 2023; Kuzmak & Kuzmak, 2023). Such behaviors, as previously claimed by Knezović and Drkić (2021), contribute to achieving both individual and organizational benefits.

5. 2. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The current research enhances understanding of how (TL) style, (EMP), and (WE) are interconnected in the Jordanian hospitality industry. By shed lighting the mediating role of WE, the research offers a better understanding of how different TL practices influence the performance employees' and their outcomes. TL not only effects employee behaviour through direct leader-employee interactions but also by fostering conducive organizational cultures that enhance employee productivity and sense of contribution. This research re-examines the relationship between TL, EMP, and WE to present a comprehensive perspective on these factors as key drivers of organizational effectiveness.

5. 3. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Hotel proprieties should invest more in training programs and development schedules that lead to enhanced transformational leadership behaviours among leaders and managers. The selected programs for both should shed light on cultivating the main key elements of transformational leadership: individualized consideration, idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation. Practical sessions and ongoing learning options can be enforced to confirm that leaders are well prepared to inspire, motivate, intellectually stimulate, enhance, and personally have great relationships with their employee teams, leading to better performance. Leaders should include employee work engagement in standard evaluations for their performance and regular assessments. This leads to understanding the engagement levels and that can provide insights into potential areas of growth and help develop strategies to improve and enhance employee performance in general.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

6. 1. RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

This research examined how transformational leaders can contribute to fulfilling the organisational goals in the Jordanian hotel industry through empowering employees. The research attempted to better understand the mediating role of work engagement in the relationship between the behaviours and attitudes of leaders and the ability of employees to meet the organi-

sational expectations of their performance. Previous studies have highlighted the impact of different leadership styles on the hotel industry performance. It is of high importance for the hotel industry to provide a proper service to their customers, which depends heavily on the leadership style used to optimise employee efforts to engage more in achieving such strategic goal, leading to better organisational outcomes.

An effective style of leadership entails involvement, loyalty and high work engagement levels. Employees will be accordingly more motivated and engaged to their organisations. This research proposed a framework to study transformational leadership and its impact on both work engagement and employee performance in the hotel industry. Leadership style and employee performance were studied as to provide competitive advantages for every Jordanian hotel in terms of increased employee service level and enhanced service quality.

From the above, this study concludes that transformational leaders inspire and motivate their employees by articulating a compelling vision and providing a sense of purpose and direction. By showing genuine concern for their employee growth and development, they create a supportive and empowering work environment. These leaders encourage creativity, innovation, and intellectual stimulation, promoting a culture of continuous improvement. As a result, employees become more emotionally committed to their work, experiencing higher levels of engagement especially in the labour-centred hospitality industry. This heightened engagement, in turn, leads to increased job satisfaction and a willingness to go above and beyond in their roles. Consequently, transformational leadership plays a key role in driving better job performance, as employees are motivated to achieve outstanding results in alignment with the organizational vision and values.

The results of this research can be utilised to improve the performance of employees in the tourism and hotel industry by setting suitable strategies, plans and practices. Hospitality business directors and managers might learn more about how to enhance the engagement of their employees and reach higher retention levels. The results of this research can be also used by hospitality business leaders to understand the issues affecting employee performance to improve the overall organisational outcomes. This research thus offers a further insight into how managers can capitalise on the relationship between transformational leadership, work engagement and employee performance in the hospitality industry.

6. 2. RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

The research limitations may present in several ways: The use of self-report measures for WE and employee performance assessment (EMP) may present social desirability preference, leading some of the employees to respond in ways they think are more suitable rather than their right feelings. Also, cultural perspectives can limit the generalizability of results, as insights of an empowered employee could vary widely across beliefs. Moreover, the response rate was low in this study which could be due to the heavy schedules in the selected hotels. Employees, especially those who are busy with operational functions, usually work irregular shifts and extra hours, which may make it hard to find free time to fill out the survey. This may decrease their likelihood of responding to voluntary study surveys. Other limitations comprise unmeasured confusing variables, such as the backgrounds of the employee and external pressures, which could influence the relationships between the research variables (TL), WE, and EMP.

The mentioned limitations recommend several possibilities for future research, such as investigative moderating factors I.e. gender, age, and job occupation that may impact leadership style selections and employee behaviors. Using observational methods might enhance the accuracy and depth of the research data. Additionally, relative studies on TL's special effects on employee performance could present contextual variations. Further research may find how different styles

of leadership like participative, transactional, and authoritative affect WE and EMP or replicate the current study in practical team environments.

6. 3. FUTURE RESEARCH AVENUES

Future research can employ a different approach to examine the relationship between the various practices of hospitality leaders and their impact on employee performance. It may be required to conduct more subject-specific research and employ suitable objective indicators of the adopted leadership styles and behaviours that affect the hospitality industry. A survey from various countries would provide more robust and generalizable results; future efforts thus may be directed to larger and more dynamic markets with a wider variety of target respondents and sample sizes. Future research may further focus on using different constructs to investigate employee performance such as productivity and other leadership styles.

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